

STORY 61.

FEEDING DUMB CREATURES.

THE SANCTITY OF A PLEDGE MADE WITH
ONE'S OWN SELF.

A MUSLIM in the time of (Hazrat) Ali owned a garden at Kufa. One day a certain chief named Ibn-Ahmad went into the garden. He found the slave who served as watchman taking his food. But what interested the visitor was that there was a dog sitting in front of the slave, who put one morsel into his own mouth, and one of the same size into the mouth of the dog.

When the slave had finished his meal, Ibn-Ahmad approached him and said "Is this a pet dog that you are so particular in feeding him?" The slave said, "No, this poor dog is a stranger. He came here and seemed faint with hunger. I was taking my meal. When I saw him in need of food I thought it unmanly and cruel, to go on eating and not to feed this dumb creature."

Ibn-Ahmad said "You did well to feed him, but what I want to understand is why you took so much care to make the morsels so exactly equal." The slave said "I had from the very beginning decided within myself that I would give the dog exactly half of my supper, and myself eat the other half. I made the morsels equal that I might not be false to my pledge."

Ibn-Ahmad was highly pleased to see the tenderness and justice of the slave. He went to the master of the garden, and bought up the slave as well as the garden. Then he came back to the slave, and said to him.

"Your self-denial and sense of justice have pleased me very much. I have bought you and the garden. I set you free, and make you a gift of the garden." The slave thanked Ibn-Ahmad heartily and said. "I accept your gift. But in return for the kindness shown to me by you in giving me my liberty I make you a present of the garden." With these words he went away.